DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 226 805 JC 830 116

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TITLE Longitudinal Study of Performance of Students Entering Harper College 1967-1981. Volume XII, Number 4.
INSTITUTION William Rainey Harper Coll., Palatine, Ill. Office of Planning and Research.
PUB DATE 2 Mar 83
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Persistence; *Attendance Patterns; Community Colleges; Continuing Education; *Full Time Students; *Grade Point Average; Longitudinal Studies; *Part Time Students; Two Year Colleges; *Two Year College Students

ABSTRACT

A longitudinal study of full- and part-time credit students was conducted at William Rainey Harper College (WRHC), Palatine, Ill., to provide comparative information on student performance and achievement between 1967 and 1981. A random sample of 200 full-time and 200 part-time students entering WRHC each fall during this period was selected, and the students' transcripts were examined to obtain data on grade point average (GPA), cumulative hours attempted and passed, persistence/attendance patterns, and number of semesters registering. The study revealed: (1) student GPA's rose following administrative decisions made in 1972 and 1974 which liberalized grading policies; (2) the average full-time student starting between 1972 and 1978 accumulated 42 credit hours and attended 4.4 semesters, and 35.5% of these students received a degree or certificate; (3) the average part-time student starting between 1971 and 1977 accumulated 17 credit hours and attended more than 3 semesters, and 11% of these students received a degree or certificate; (4) the percentage of full-time students taking continuing education courses rose from 8.0% in 1969 to 19.5% in 1974, then fell to 7.0% in 1980 and 1981; (5) the percentage of part-time students taking continuing education courses rose from 16.5% in 1967 to 29.5% in 1975 before falling to 13.5% in 1980 and 17.0% in 1981; and (6) the average student age throughout the period was 18.6 years for full-time students and 26 years for part-time students. (Author/HB)

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LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS ENTERING HARPER COLLEGE - 1967-1981

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Volume XII, No. 4
March 2, 1983

JC 830 116

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ABSTRACT

THIS STUDY FOLLOWED SAMPLES OF SUCCESSIVE CLASSES (1967-1981) OF 200 FULL-TIME AND 200 PART-TIME STUDENTS EACH YEAR IN A LONGITUDINAL MANNER. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY WAS TO PROVIDE SOME BASIC INSTITUTIONAL DATA ABOUT STUDENT PERFORMANCE OVER TIME. DATA WAS OBTAINED ON THEIR PERFORMANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT AT HARPER THROUGH ANALYSIS OF THE REGULAR AND CONTINUING EDUCATION TRANSCRIPTS OF EACH OF THE STUDENTS SAMPLED.

OVER THE YEARS THE AVERAGE GRADE POINT OF A STUDENT HAS RISEN IN DIRECT RELATIONSHIP TO CHANGES IN THE GRADING POLICY.

THE AVERAGE FULL-TIME STUDENT STARTING BETWEEN 1972 AND 1978 ACCUMULATED 42 CREDIT HOURS AND ATTENDED 4.4 SEMESTERS WHILE 35.5 PERCENT RECEIVED A DEGREE OR A CERTIFICATE. MEANWHILE, THE AVERAGE PART-TIME STUDENT STARTING BETWEEN 1971 AND 1977 HAS ACCUMULATED 17 CREDIT HOURS AND ATTENDED MORE THAN THREE SEMESTERS WHILE 11 PERCENT OF THIS CLASS HAS RECEIVED A DEGREE OR A CERTIFICATE.

THE RAPIDLY GROWING CONTINUING EDUCATION ENROLLMENT IN THE 1970S BEGAN TO IMPACT THE DEGREE CREDIT ENROLLMENT BY 1974 AS SHOWN BY THIS LONGITUDINAL STUDY. SOME 9 PERCENT OF THE PART-TIME STUDENTS SINCE 1974 HAD TAKEN CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES PREVIOUS TO OR SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THEIR DEGREE CREDIT ENROLLMENT. MOREOVER, IT IS PROJECTED THAT CLOSE TO 25 PERCENT OF THESE PART-TIME STUDENTS WILL EVENTUALLY PARTICIPATE IN THE CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM. THE IMPACT OF CONTINUING EDUCATION ON FULL-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS IS LESS DRAMATIC.

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Purpose

The purpose of this study is to follow samples of beginning full-time and part-time traditional credit students over a long period of time observing their performance and achievements at Harper College. This type of longitudinal study provides the answers to such questions as: What percentage of all full-time students starting at Harper will ever graduate or accumulate 36 hours of credit or attend four semesters or will take Continuing Education courses? The same questions can be answered about beginning part-time students. Other questions can also be answered such as their GPA, whether they have transferred into Harper, their age and their standing in their high school graduating class.

Population Surveyed

A random sample of 200 full-time and 200 part-time beginning traditional credit students has been gathered from the population of students entering each fall from 1967 to 1981.

Method Used

Transcript data have been gathered on all students in the target samples and the data analyzed.

Discussion of Results

There have been two policy decisions which have affected the grade point average of students over the years. The first occurred in 1972 when students were able to repeat failed courses and replace the old D or F with the new grade rather than just averaging it in. The second policy change came in 1974 and allowed faculty to give N grades rather than Fs to students who simply didn't attend. The following table shows the average grade point of students in these three periods of time.

Student started as a:	1967-1971	Repeat and Replacement of Grade Policy Instituted 1972-1973	N Grade Instituted 1974-1981
Full-time student	1.95	2.31	2.61
Part-time student	2.25	2.31	2.72

This table shows that the grade point average jumped in 1972 at the start of the repeat and grade replacement policy and again in 1974 when the N grade policy started. Also note part-time students generally have a higher GPA than full-time students. Other studies have shown that this phenomenon is caused by older and generally part-time students having a higher GPA.

In terms of length of time students persisted at Harper and credit hours accumulated, this trend started off at a high persistence level for the first 1967 class, but then the persistence level dropped dramatically reaching a low in 1968-1969. The level rose again until it leveled off in the early 70s.

The average full-time student starting between 1972 and 1980 has averaged 44 hours attempted, 42 hours passed, and has attended 4.4 semesters. In fact, over sixteen percent of these full-time students stayed for seven or more semesters, which means into at least their fourth year at Harper. This data seems to render the description "a two-year college" meaningless. Other data shows that since 1974 76 percent of these classes have returned the following year or later. Some 35.5 percent of the full-time students starting between 1972 and 1979 have earned either an associate degree or a certificate at Harper. It appears from projection that after five to seven years, the recent entering classes will also approach this figure.

The average part-time student beginning between 1971 and 1978 has averaged 18 hours attempted and 17 hours passed and has attended 3.4 semesters. Some 15 percent have attended seven or more semesters. Moreover, since 1976, 52 percent of this group has returned to Harper a year or more later. About 11 percent of these part-time samples (1971-1979) have received an associate degree or a certificate. Projections indicate that after seven years, more recent classes will match these figures.

Over the years five to 15 percent of the students have officially transferred credits in from other colleges. It is interesting to note, however, that student characteristic studies have shown that 35-45 percent of Harper's students have had some postsecondary experience prior to coming to Harper. Thus most students who have attended another college don't attempt to transfer in credits.

The average age of the entering full-time student has remained close to 18.6 while the average age of the entering part-time student has cycled around 26. The age of these entering students has remained fairly constant, but the mix of full-time and part-time students is changing, and therefore, the average age of the entire traditional credit student body is gradually increasing.

The high school graduating class rank of Harper's entering students rose consistently until 1974 and has remained fairly constant since then between the 60th and 65th percentiles. The ACT scores of our full-time students have been lower in the last five years. Before 1977, the average composite was 19.1. The last five years it has averaged 17.5. Data is available on only a small portion of the part-time students, but over the years their composite scores have been averaging 1.6 points below the full-time students.

The dramatic growth in Continuing Education (C.E.) enrollment in the 70s and its relationship to traditional credit enrollment started to show up in the longitudinal study data with the 1974 entering class. Since there was no Continuing Education enrollment until the fall of 1970, it was impossible for the first four traditional credit classes to have enrolled after first being introduced to higher education by Continuing Education offerings. Enrollment in Continuing Education previous to or simultaneously with degree credit was at first small, but grew rapidly in the early years and its effect can now be seen in the degree credit classes which began in 1974. Looking at the entering classes since 1974, 9 percent of the part-time students starting in those years had previously taken or were simultaneously taking Continuing

Education courses. Over the years it appears another 16 percent of the part-time degree credit students take Continuing Education courses later. This now means a total of 25 percent of these part-time degree credit students will eventually also enroll in Continuing Education.

As would be expected, the impact of Continuing Education on full-time degree credit enrollment is less dramatic, but nevertheless, 2½ percent of these full-time students starting since 1974 had previously enrolled in Continuing Education offerings or were simultaneously taking these offerings. Over the years an additional 12 percent of the full-time degree credit students participated in Continuing Education courses later. In total, it appears now that about 15 percent of the full-time degree credit students will eventually also enroll in Continuing Education offerings.

Major Conclusions

Over the years the average grade point of a student has risen in direct relationship to changes in the grading policy.

The average full-time student starting between 1972 and 1978 accumulated 42 credit hours and attended 4.4 semesters while 35.5 percent received a degree or a certificate. Meanwhile, the average part-time student starting between 1971 and 1977 has accumulated 17 credit hours and attended more than three semesters while 11 percent of this class has received a degree or a certificate.

The rapidly growing Continuing Education enrollment in the 1970s began to impact the degree credit enrollment by 1974 as shown by this longitudinal study. Some 9 percent of the part-time students since 1974 had taken Continuing Education courses previous to or simultaneously with their degree credit enrollment. Moreover, it is projected that close to 25 percent of these part-time students will eventually participate in the Continuing Education program. The impact of Continuing Education on full-time degree credit students is less dramatic.

LONGITUDINAL DATA OF FULL-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER

	Students Beginning in the Fall of:														
	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sample Size	200	20[illegible]	187	218	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Withdrew before establishing a GPA	3	1	5	6	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean GPA	1.92	1.83	1.79	2.05	2.18	2.33	2.29	2.60	2.62	2.64	2.65	2.66	2.63	2.54	2.55
Mean cumulative hours attempted	45.65	41.22	33.23	37.44	40.37	44.67	42.7	46.0	43.2	43.3	45.52	45.84	42.94	44.60	33.70
Mean cumulative hours passed	40.49	35.24	27.94	33.50	37.15	41.98	32.8	45.07	42.3	42.4	44.57	45.19	41.91	39.80	24.50
Percent registered one year later	57.5	53.0	42.2	45.4	58.0	58.0	56.0	68.5	60.0	59.5	60.0	65.0	65.0	68.0	66.0
Percent not registered one year later but who returned another time	18.0	13.0	15.0	12.9	10.0	10.5	15.0	11.5	14.0	16.0	14.5	11.0	10.0	10.0	0
Percent who never returned after first year	24.5	34.0	42.4	41.7	32.0	31.5	29.0	20.0	26.0	24.5	25.0	24.0	25.0	22.0	34.0
Average number of semesters registered	4.4	3.81	3.25	3.67	4.0	4.3	4.31	4.71	4.40	4.50	4.50	4.51	4.13	4.10	2.85
Percent registering for:															
One Semester	14.5	11.5	24.6	18.8	15.0	8.0	9.0	6.5	7.0	4.5	4.5	6.0	5.5	5.0	5.5
Two Semesters	12.0	23.0	19.8	21.5	19.5	23.0	21.0	14.5	18.0	17.0	20.0	17.0	19.0	12.5	28.0
Three Semesters	9.5	12.5	15.5	12.4	10.5	10.5	11.5	9.0	15.5	18.0	12.0	8.5	12.5	14.5	42.0
Four Semesters	19.5	18.5	18.7	19.3	18.0	16.5	14.0	20.5	15.5	15.5	15.0	18.5	19.5	26.0	24.5
Five Semesters	16.5	16.5	7.5	8.7	12.5	14.0	15.5	16.5	15.5	18.0	17.0	19.5	23.5	26.5	0
Six semesters	12.0	7.5	6.4	8.3	10.0	12.5	13.0	14.0	13.5	10.5	14.0	15.0	12.0	13.0	0
Seven or More Semesters	16.0	10.5	7.5	11.0	14.5	15.5	16.0	19.0	15.0	16.5	17.5	15.5	8.0	2.5	0

LONGITUDINAL DATA OF FULL-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER (continued)

	Students Beginning in the Fall of:														
Percent Passing:	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Under 24 hours no degree	30.5	38.0	52.9	43.1	40.0	22.0	29.0	20.0	21.0	21.0	20.5	16.5	25.5	18.5	39.0
24-35 hours no degree	11.0	20.0	15.5	14.6	13.5	22.5	17.0	18.0	22.5	25.0	20.0	21.0	17.0	21.5	56.5
36-47 hours no degree	13.0	9.5	7.5	9.2	7.0	5.0	10.0	8.5	9.5	8.5	7.0	14.0	11.5	18.5	4.0
48 or more hours no degree	21.5	16.0	11.2	12.4	13.5	9.0	9.5	14.5	10.5	17.0	14.5	15.0	14.0	24.5	0
48 or more hours with degree	21.5	16.5	11.8	17.9	23.5	35.5	30.0	37.0	32.0	25.5	36.5	31.0	30.0	12.0	0
Less than 48 hours with degree	1.5	0	1.1	1.4	1.0	4.0	3.0	.5	3.0	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.0	2.5	.5
Certificate Only	1.0	0	0	1.4	1.5	2.0	1.5	1.5	1.5	2.0	.5	1.0	1.0	2.5	.5
Percent transferring in officially	16.5	14.5	5.3	7.8	10.5	13.0	12.0	9.0	14.0	5.5	8.0	6.5	5.0	11.0	7.0
Percent taking Continuing Education Courses	8.0	11.0	8.0	11.5	16.5	19.0	18.5	19.5	15.5	14.5	9.0	12.5	8.5	7.0	7.0
Percent taking degree credit courses first	8.0	11.0	8.0	11.5	16.0	18.5	18.0	17.5	13.5	11.5	6.5	8.5	7.0	6.0	3.5
Percent taking Continuing Education Courses first	0	0	0	0	.5	.5	.5	1.0	2.0	1.5	1.5	0	.5	.5	2.0
Percent taking them Simultaneously	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.0	0	1.5	1.0	4.0	1.0	.5	1.5
Mean Age	18.5	18.8	18.7	19.2	18.4	19.3	18.4	18.7	19.3	18.7	18.7	18.1	18.4	18.7	18.4
Sample Size of Age	200	199	181	209	193	170	166	194	179	194	192	190	194	196	197
Mean High School Rank	38.1	39.9	35.5	41.1	45.1	49.0	58.4	61.7	59.5	63.1	63.8	63.7	63.0	64.9	59.4
Sample Size of Rank	147	116	153	191	134	114	138	162	166	167	189	165	156	168	185
Mean ACT composite	19.3	19.7	19.3	20.6	16.0	19.5	19.1	19.1	18.9	19.2	18.2	18.2	17.2	18.9	17.3
Sample size of ACT	152	175	163	173	61	61	113	46	111	54	110	46	43	88	126
Entire Entering College ACT Composite														17.5 1038	17.4 1509

LONGITUDINAL DATA OF PART-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER

	Students Beginning in the Fall of:														
	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Sample Size	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
Withdrew before establishing a GPA	21	16	19	9	12	0	6	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean GPA	2.30	2.11	2.22	2.30	2.33	2.24	2.37	2.87	2.67	2.64	2.76	2.71	2.70	2.62	2.75
Mean cumulative hours attempted	17.69	14.92	15.83	15.53	18.49	18.84	17.94	15.10	16.99	20.7	19.30	18.76	15.50	15.10	12.2
Mean cumulative hours passed	16.0	13.02	13.91	13.95	16.71	16.67	16.35	14.70	16.40	19.72	18.80	17.93	14.70	12.50	8.8
Percent registered one year later	29.5	21.5	25.5	25.0	24.0	29.0	31.0	32.0	32.0	39.0	36.0	43.5	41.50	37.5	44.0
Percent not registered one year later but who returned another time	16.5	21.0	13.5	13.5	16.0	15.5	14.5	12.5	13.5	13.5	13.5	12.0	13.0	10.5	0
Percent who never returned after first year	54.0	57.5	61.0	61.5	60.0	55.5	54.5	55.5	54.5	47.5	50.5	44.5	45.5	52.0	56.0
Average number of semesters registered	3.38	2.92	3.00	2.80	3.30	3.39	3.20	3.23	3.50	3.70	3.50	3.30	3.10	2.80	2.20
Percent registering for:															
One Semester	39.5	42.0	47.0	42.5	36.0	39.0	39.0	36.0	31.5	22.5	33.0	24.2	25.0	27.5	32.0
Two Semesters	21.5	23.5	16.5	23.5	27.0	20.0	21.0	24.5	23.5	28.0	19.0	21.5	23.5	24.5	30.0
Three Semesters	7.5	8.0	7.0	10.5	8.0	6.5	10.5	10.5	13.0	11.5	12.0	15.5	16.0	18.0	29.0
Four Semesters	7.5	7.5	7.5	6.5	6.5	5.5	6.5	5.5	7.0	11.0	10.0	13.0	11.0	10.0	9.0
Five Semesters	5.5	6.5	3.5	2.5	3.5	5.5	5.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	3.5	7.0	10.0	12.0	0
Six Semesters	5.0	2.5	6.0	2.5	5.0	6.5	4.5	5.5	4.0	6.5	4.0	10.0	8.5	6.0	0
Seven or More Semesters	14.5	10.0	12.5	12.0	14.0	17.0	13.5	15.0	17.0	15.5	18.5	8.5	6.0	2.0	0

LONGITUDINAL DATA ON PART-TIME DEGREE CREDIT STUDENTS AT HARPER (continued)

Percent Passing:	Students Beginning in the Fall of: 1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Under 12 hours no degree	67.0	70.5	69.5	71.0	64.0	59.0	63.0	62.0	56.5	51.0	55.5	52.5	57.0	59.0	72.5
12-23 hours no degree	13.0	13.5	9.5	11.0	15.0	13.5	15.0	15.0	21.0	20.0	18.5	21.0	19.0	24.5	24.0
24-35 hours no degree	5.0	6.0	4.5	3.0	5.0	9.5	4.0	8.0	6.5	8.5	6.0	8.5	9.5	8.0	3.5
36-47 hours no degree	3.0	1.5	4.5	3.5	1.0	3.0	3.5	2.0	3.5	3.5	3.0	7.0	4.5	4.5	0
48 hours or more no degree	2.5	1.0	2.5	1.0	1.0	2.5	4.0	.5	2.5	7.0	4.0	3.0	1.5	1.5	0
48 hours or more with degree	7.5	5.0	6.0	6.0	9.0	8.0	8.0	7.0	5.5	7.0	9.5	4.0	2.5	0	0
Less than 48 hours with degree	1.5	1.5	2.5	3.5	2.0	.5	2.0	3.5	1.0	1.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	1.0	0
Certificate Only	.5	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	4.0	.5	2.0	3.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	5.0	1.5	0
Percent transferring in officially	8.5	7.5	8.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	11.5	14.5	9.0	9.0	10.5	6.5	10.0	7.0	6.5
Percent taking Continuing Education Courses	16.5	13.5	15.5	19.5	20.5	22.0	21.0	28.5	29.5	18.5	26.5	22.0	23.0	13.5	17.0
Percent taking degree credit courses first	16.5	13.5	15.5	19.5	15.5	20.0	18.0	16.0	19.5	14.5	9.5	18.0	14.5	7.5	6.5
Percent taking Continuing Education courses first	0	0	0	0	3.5	2.0	2.0	10.5	8.0	1.5	4.5	1.0	2.5	2.5	7.5
Percent taking them simultaneously	0	0	0	0	1.5	0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.5	12.5	3.0	6.0	3.5	3.5
Mean Age	27.2	26.4	26.9	26.1	25.9	25.4	23.6	29.8	26.6	25.6	26.9	25.6	25.7	25.9	24.8
Sample Size Age	199	198	195	182	190	173	133	197	168	183	189	183	192	194	184
Mean High School Rank	33.0	49.9	47.6	26.6	31.6	33.3	60.6	65.0	60.7	62.5	66.3	64.8	63.2	60.6	63.4
Sample Size Rank	15	96	175	153	28	32	120	153	156	171	183	156	144	148	164
Mean ACT Composite	18.1	17.9	16.1	20.4	18.8	18.8	19.0	20.3	17.4	15.4	17.3	16.3	16.2	14.5	15.8
Sample Size ACT	17	16	10	27	19	13	26	3	22	12	29	14	9	21	39

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